Luke 23:32-43 – Lessons from the Cross

- ⇒ **Pre-message reading is Mark 15:16-39 (Need Stricken, Smitten, hymn verse 3)**

- ⇒ **READ Luke 23:32-43 the Prayer**

- ⇒ Whenever I read the account of the Lord's sufferings in any of the four gospels, I think of Moses's experience **while caring for sheep in the wilderness**. Remember, Moses had to flee from the Pharoh and was in danger of losing his life.

- ⇒ The Scripture tells us that the Angel of the LORD appeared to Moses in a burning bush and said, "Take **your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground."**

- ⇒ **The account of the Savior's suffering and death** is **of the utmost importance for our souls and deserves to be approached with a heart full of humility, wonder, and worship.**

- ⇒ My wife and I have had the occasion to visit a number of European cathedrals.

- ⇒ Many are quite beautiful and majestic structures and are generally centuries old. Some of you have perhaps seen them or seen pictures of them. **We've been** to **Notre Dame in Paris, St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, Westminster Cathedral in London, and several others as well**.

- ⇒ Now, **one particular cathedral in Milan, Italy,** is known for its **three** large arched doorways leading **from the church vestibule (or lobby) into the sanctuary** where the worship services are conducted.

- ⇒ There is **one doorway on the right, one on the left, and the main doorway in the center**.

- ⇒ Above each of the **three stone arched doorways**. that lead into the sanctuary. there is an
    - **inscription carved into the stone above each door.** .

- ⇒ The inscription on the **right archway** entrance reads, "**All that pleases is but for a moment**."

- ⇒ The inscription on the **left archway** entrance reads, "**All that troubles is but for a moment**."

- ⇒ The inscription over the **center archway** leading into the sanctuary reads, "**All that is important is eternal**."

- ⇒ What these words address, of course, are **spiritual and eternal priorities**.

- ⇒ As you enter the sanctuary, the message is clear. There is nothing of more importance than **giving full attention, giving your priority, to the worship, adoration, and praise of the one true almighty God of heaven and earth**

- ⇒ **Nothing more important than hearing and receiving the Word of God.**

- ⇒ **Certainly, the Gospel accounts of** the **Lord's sufferings on Calvary are a major priority in all our lives and are of utmost importance to our souls!**

- ⇒ **Today, I want us to examine Luke's account of Jesus' suffering**, **specifically what Jesus said on the cross. (This** list is not exhaustive.) There are seven sayings in total**.**

- ⇒ **No words can describe** the human **pain and suffering** our Lord experienced before and during his time on the cross.

- ⇒ During this time **period in the history** of the Roman Empire, **death by crucifixion was <u>considered the worst death for the worst of criminals</u>**.

- ⇒ **Even before getting to the cross, Jesus** would have experienced whipping so severe that much of His flesh was torn away from His body.

- ⇒ One OT prophet, **writing hundreds of years before Jesus** came into the world, described what Jesus would look like after his sufferings. "**His appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of mankind**." Isa. 52:14

- ⇒ **Crucifixion, as practiced by the Roman government, was a merciless, cruel, and evil practice!**

- ⇒ In addition to the physical agony, Jesus had to endure the humiliation of having his **clothes taken from Him**. He **had to endure being spit upon and the mocking** of the soldiers, the criminals, and the Jewish leaders taunting him, saying he "**saved others; let him save himself.**"

- ⇒ **<u>And the truth is Jesus could have saved himself</u>**! At any time! He told his disciples as much! He told them he **could call down legions of angels** and they would rescue him!

- ⇒ Jesus **had complete control** over what happened to him!

- ⇒ Listen to what the Lord said in John 10:17, **17** For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. **18** **No one takes it**
    - **from me**, **but I lay it down of my own accord**. I have the authority to lay it down, and I have the authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father."

- ⇒ Though this is true, in the language of the OT prophet Isaiah, it was the "**will of the Lord to crush him**." **He was pierced for our sins; he was crushed for our iniquities**."

- ⇒ With his wounds, the Christian is healed! In the words of scripture, "**All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all**."

- ⇒ It was the **will of God for the Savior to take upon himself the punishment for sinners**.

- ⇒ Sinners like the very ones here in this account **who were mocking and spitting on him**!
    - **Shall I dare say sinners just like all of us here today!**

    - Yet as awful and terrible a death by crucifixion is, the Gospel of Jesus Christ is good news to us! Luke had written earlier in chapter 19 that "**the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost**."

- ⇒ That is exactly what we see in this passage I just read! All the way to the point of death!
    - **We see Jesus's love, compassion**, and **concern for the souls of men**.

- ⇒ **He is the same today**! The Word of God tells us that Jesus Christ is the **same yesterday, today, and forever**! Even today, Christ is concerned for each and every soul here this morning!

- ⇒ **His love, compassion, and desire to save sinners** from judgment are as strong today as it was when He walked on this earth!

- **Jesus makes two statements from the cross, as recorded by Luke, moments**.

- ⇒ **The first one is Verse 34 – I will Read once more**
- ⇒ **The second one is in Verse 43 – Read it.**

- ⇒ **From these two sayings of Jesus on the cross, there are** undoubtedly **many lessons to be learned.**

- ⇒ **But for our purpose today, I'd like us to** focus on **two crucial gospel truths—two lessons to learn from** Jesus's **words while suffering on the Cross!**

- ⇒ First, mankind has a great need because of the seriousness of sin. Second, Christ is willing and able to meet that need and receive all who come to Him in faith. In this, I want us to see Christ's amazing love.

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- ⇒ One author I recently read wrote, and I wholeheartedly agree with him: "The cross is the supreme revelation of God, and it is a revelation of unimaginable love and mercy!

- ⇒ **First, then, mankind's greatest and urgent need! What is that?**

- ⇒ **Jesus, I believe, tells us as much in verse 34**. "**Father, forgive them**."

- ⇒ It is true Jesus was likely referring here to those who were present and had no idea who he was! But in a much broader sense, I believe mankind is in his mind!

- ⇒ **You see mankind is in desperate need of the forgiveness of sins**.

- ⇒ God's Word is abundantly clear that by **nature, man is in rebellion** against God. **Outside of Christ, man is spiritually dead**. **A person may be physically alive, but outside of a saving relationship with Jesus Christ, the Bible teaches he or she is** a **spiritual corpse!**

- ⇒ **You see, quite simply, sin is a fatal disease. It is terminal!**

- ⇒ How often in the gospel accounts is the forgiveness of sins at the heart of Jesus' message?

- ⇒ Mark 2 – man paralyzed carried by four. "**Son your sins are forgiven**."

- ⇒ When **God created man**, **man rebelled** against God. Sadly, mankind has been doing that ever since.

- ⇒ Sin is **all-consuming and self-destructive**. Jesus said in John 8:34. "**Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin**."

- *Man's Ignorance*

- ⇒ **What is more, by nature, man is unaware to the magnitude of sin. In other words, there is a natural ignorance of man's condition before God.**

- ⇒ **Jesus says as much in verse 34. In his prayer to the Father, He says, "They know not what they do."**

- ⇒ **Unaware, ignorant, and blinded to the fact that sin separates them from their Holy Creator**!

- ⇒ The **Old Testament prophet Isaiah** wrote about this many centuries before Christ's time.

- ⇒ I **recently read an article** that helps us understand sin's **self-destructive and ignorant nature. I thought it was quite interesting.**

- ⇒ The article **describes a technique Eskimos use when they need to kill off wolves**.

- ⇒ The title of the article is "How **Eskimos kill wolves**.

- Now, **Eskimos** often **need to kill wolves because wolves tend to kill and eat too many of the caribous and deer that the Eskimos depend upon for food in the wintertime**.
- **Here is what they do.**

- **First,** the Eskimo **coats a sharp knife blade with animal blood and allows it** to **freeze**. Then, he **adds another layer of blood** and another until the blade is completely concealed in a **block of frozen blood**.

- **Next**, he fixes his **knife on the ground with the blade up.**

- When a **wolf with a great sense of smell follows his nose, he smells the blood** and **discovers the bait**. He licks it, tasting the **fresh, frozen blood**. He begins to lick faster, vigorously lapping the blade until the keen edge is bare.

- Feverishly now, **harder and harder, the wolf licks the blade**. So great becomes his craving for blood that the **wolf is ignorant to the razor-sharp sting** of the naked blade on his own tongue, nor does he realize that his insatiable thirst is being satisfied by his own blood. He craves more and more until he **drops dead in the snow**.

- **Just like the wolf licking the blood, he doesn't know his end is destruction**! **So, in a similar way, many go on with their lives unaware of their great need for the forgiveness of sin!**

- **For all who are not in Christ**, sin leads to more sin, and they **can NOT stop,** even though they will forever be alienated from the Creator. God, the Holy Spirit, must intervene!

- The **Bible vividly describes a person's life outside** of a relationship with Jesus Christ. Listen to how the Apostle Paul describes it in Ephesians 2.

- ⇒ **<u>Writing to Christians,</u>** the apostle reminds them what they were like in an unsaved state! Below is Ephesians 2:1-3

- As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins,[2] in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. [3] All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh[a] and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath.

- ⇒ **Does that describe your condition this morning**?

- ⇒ If it does, **<u>know for sure that the wonderful truth is that Jesus</u> Christ has a deep concern for your soul and a deep desire for you** to **know Him**.

- ⇒ We know for sure that **forgiveness for sin and guilt is available** at this very moment **because of Jesus Christ's death on the cross**.

- ⇒ Dear friends, I **hope that these words of Jesus <u>during His suffering</u> will help us see the willingness**, **compassion, and desire Christ has for souls**.

- ⇒ In the midst of his suffering and pain. In the midst of the **cruel activity against Him**.
    - **<u>Even then,</u> he prays to God the Father for their forgiveness**.

- ⇒ We learn from the death of Christ that **God hates all sin and evil. God is a perfect moral being. Perfect in every way. Perfect in love, perfect in mercy, and yes perfect in justice**.

- ⇒ How many in our world, and perhaps sometimes we ourselves, think in our hearts that sin **<u>is but a very small matter?</u>**

- ⇒ **<u>That is exactly what the evil one wants us to think</u>**. Going back to the garden and the serpent's dialogue with Eve. Remember the third chapter of Genesis?

- Now, the serpent was craftier than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made.

- He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?" [2] And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the
- garden, [3] but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" [4] But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. [5] **For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil**."

- ⇒ From the very beginning, the devil tried to make light of sin!
- ⇒ He is the father of lies!
- ⇒ He is still active today with the same lies!
- ⇒ **So many in our day hear the account of Adam's fall and think to themselves, what is all this fuss, <u>just because they ate a piece of fruit</u>?**
- ⇒ **They miss entirely the fact that <u>their Creator had given the command.</u> It was <u>nothing short of rebellion</u> against their good and loving maker!**
- ⇒ Dear friends, if we really **want to understand what God thinks of sin**, **look at** the **cross of Jesus Christ**! Look at the terrible pain and sufferings Christ endured for His people!

- ⇒ At the church I attend, we often **sing hymns focusing on the cross of Christ**.
  - There is a stanza in one hymn that I want to share with us.

- ⇒ The hymn has to do with the overall suffering Jesus endured. Perhaps some of you know it. **The** hymn's title **is "Stricken, smitten, and afflicted**."

- ⇒ READ **Stanza 3** of the song

- ⇒ My friends, **this is God's love** for sinners! **If you desire to be free from the guilt and shame you feel inside**, the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross is for you!

- ⇒ **<u>Jesus cried out to people like you and me</u>**, saying, **"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. [29] Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls**." Matthew 11 This is the Christ of Holy Scripture!

- **Christ's Willingness to Forgive – Point 2**

- ⇒ **Secondly, and lastly**, not only does this text teach us the urgent need mankind has (namely the forgiveness of sin), but it also teaches us, the wonderful truth of Christ's power and willingness to save ALL sinners who come to Him in faith.

- ⇒ This is so clearly shown to us in the **experience of one of the criminals** who was sentenced to death by crucifixion, along with Jesus.

- ⇒ **Look again at verse 43. The man says, "Jesus, remember me when you come. You're your kingdom." Jesus** responds, "**Truly, I say to you, <u>today you will be with me in paradise</u>."**

- ⇒ What an amazing change took place in this man's life! Here, he is being **punished justly for** his crimes.

- ⇒ He undoubtedly **lived a loose and fast life, likely with little to no concern** for his eternal soul. A soul that can never die!

- ⇒ The gospel writers Matthew and Mark tell us that **at the beginning of the crucifixion, <u>BOTH criminals were mocking him</u>**.

- ⇒ Mark writes in 15:32, "**Those who were crucified with him also reviled him."**

- ⇒ Listen to **<u>Matthew's description</u>** in his account of the crucifixion and the two criminals.

- ⇒ **READ below Matthew 27:38 – 44**.

- ⇒ **38** Then two robbers were crucified with him, one on the right and one on the
    - left. **39** And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads **40** and saying, "You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross." **41** So also the chief priests, with the scribes and elders, mocked him, saying, **42** "He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. **43** He trusts in God; let God deliver him
    - now if he desires him. For he said, 'I am the Son of God.'" **44 And the robbers who were crucified with him also reviled him in the same way**.

- ⇒ **According to Luke's account <u>something very remarkable happened to one of the two criminals</u>**!

- ⇒ **One of them went right to his grave, mocking and reviling the Son of God**. **Rejecting the only one that could eternally save him! He had no fear or respect for God!**

- ⇒ His **heart was as hard as stone**. Like so many people in today's world, his conscience was hard as a rock! He was, sadly, a spiritually blind fool!

- ⇒ But **what a change** we see in the **other criminal**.

- ⇒ **P<u>erhaps</u>** <u>he understands he is a sinner</u> **<u>for the first time in his life</u>**. He knows it n**ot just in his head but in his heart of hearts.** We see a great change!

- ⇒ Notice in verse 40 that he is **<u>NO longer mocking</u>** Christ!

- ⇒ He asks the other criminal, "**Do you NOT fear God since you are under the same sentence of condemnation**.?" "**And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong**." Verses 40,41.

- ⇒ What is he saying? He is **confessing his sinfulness**, **acknowledging his guilt**.

- ⇒ But not only that! **He humbles himself and acknowledges that he deserves condemnation**. "**We indeed justly,**" he says to the other criminal.

- ⇒ He **makes no excuse** and knows full well that **his sentence is due to his own actions**!

- ⇒ Finally, **before it was too late**, **he saw himself as a lost sinner in need of a Savior**!

- ⇒ He **sees that he can**not **save himself, so he cries out by faith** to the Lord Jesus Christ.

- ⇒ "**Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom**." Verse 40.

- ⇒ This **man no longer went along with the crowd**.

- ⇒ The Bible tells us that Jesus was **despised and rejected** by men." **That was no longer true for this changed criminal**.

- ⇒ **Now, Jesus was everything**. Jesus is King! Despite all the world's noise, this man, in his dying moments, **knew in his heart his need for Christ**.

- ⇒ **And he learned Christ's willingness to save him**! The criminal believed. Thus, we see the necessity of faith and the wonderful grace of God's acceptance of the believer!

- **Conclusion**

- ⇒ So, what about us this morning? The real question, the most important question, is have we experienced the forgiveness of our own sins?

- ⇒ **Earlier, I said we need only look at the cross to see how** seriously **God views man's sin.**

- ⇒ **I would also like to say that we need only look at the cross to see the amazing love and mercy our great God has for mankind**.

- ⇒ Do we believe Jesus Christ suffered and died because of our own sins?

- ⇒ Or, perhaps we are NOT like the mockers in this account, but still, in our hearts of hearts, we have not, by faith, come to the Lord?

- ⇒ Yes, this repentant criminal waited until the last moment of his life to come to faith in Christ.

- ⇒ I hope no one thinks they have time to wait or that they can live however they like. Down the road, I'll think about my sins before God.

- ⇒ My friend, we have no idea when we will die. Today, tomorrow, a year from now, 20 years from now!

- ⇒ Also, if you are planning to wait, how do you know you will even have an interest in Christ if you have ignored him your whole life?

- I want to close with another stanza from a wonderful hymn that Christians worldwide love. The hymn is entitled "Man of Sorrows."

- **"Bearing shame and scoffing rude, In my place condemned he stood, sealed my pardon with blood. Hallelujah, what a Savior!"** Amen

- Let us pray.